

A  
 REVIEW  
 OF THE  
 STATE  
 OF THE  
 BRITISH NATION.

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Saturday, October 15. 1769.

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**I** Took the Freedom in my last to enquire into a strange new-fashion'd Mystery, a Kind of Ham Plague lately come upon us——As if we had not National Afflictions enough otherways——This is what in my last I call'd

DEARTH and PLENTY.

That the Price of Corn throughout the whole Island is extravagantly high; but especially in and about *London*, is a Truth, I need not tell any Body; Experience will give you all a good Account of that, and your Pockets may be your Informers: But that at the same time the whole Nation is full of Corn, even to the remotest *Northern Angle of Scotland*, this will be such a Paradox, that when it comes to be ex-

amin'd into, must tell us—we are grossly impos'd upon; that it is very necessary to enquire into the Particulars, and to do Justice on those that are the Cause of it, let them be who it will.

In my last I gave you an Account of some of my own Observations, relating to the Quantity of Corn, through the Center of this whole Island; I have been an Eye-Witness to a very great and very happy Harvest in a great many Places——I am writing this Paper in *Scotland*, where I can look out of my Window, and see the Fields standing full of the Shocks of Corn, the Quantity great, the Sheaves heavy, the Season kindly, and all Hands busie carrying it home——The Farmers Yards are full  
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of Stacks of Corn already carry'd in. The Country People are chearful and glad-hearted at the Sight of their Corn, the Ministers are on every Occasion giving GOD Thanks for the good Season—— In short, it has pleas'd GOD every where to cause the Earth to bring forth Plenty of Food, for Man and Beast, and the Year is crown'd with his Blessing—— Nor can I, by diligent Enquiry, find out one Place, where they have any Scarcity; some Places may be worse furnish'd, and the Corn be either poorer or backwarder than others; and I know, the low Lands in *Lincolnshire* and the Isle of *Ely* were pretty much drowned in the Fore-part of the Year—— But nothing of Scarcity can be pretended to any where.

What then can be said for this unaccountable Price of Corn? — And where, Gentlemen, at London especially, are your Senses, to let a Parcel of Scoundrels impose upon you in the most necessary Article of Life, and cheat you in a Manner so destructive to the common Good? Are ye not flock-jobb'd enough, and have ye not been discount'd and bear-skin'd enough, but you must be Corn-jobb'd? — Strange! What Things are *English* Folks, that they run into every Pit, are taken in every Snare, bite at every Hook? — The *French* are starv'd for Want of a Crop growing; the *Dutch* are pinch'd, because they dare not fetch it at *Dantzick* for Fear of the Plague; 'tis scarce in *Portugal*, because the Frontiers are ravag'd; and in *Spain*, because of the great Armies: But it is dear in *England*, for no Reason that I know of, but because we have more than we can devour; I say no Reason, because there is no Reason to be given for it, but what we ought to be asham'd to give; no Reason, but because we have F——s Magistrates, and K——s People.

Was ever any Nation bewitch'd before? DEARTH and PLENTY! That's like Crutches, instead of Shoes, to go a Journey; 'tis dying for Fear of Death; 'tis like Tears without Sorrow; 'tis mixing of Contraries; joining the Poles; 'tis in short a most preposterous and unaccountable Piece of Contradiction, and what no People can

account for, but those that have already accounted for the Loss of their Politick Understanding, and are profess'd Antipodes to themselves.

Would you leave of talking the Disease, and propose the Remedy, says One to me, that stands by at the Writing of this—— Remedy! Why, what Remedy for Lunatics? Bedlamites are generally reduc'd by afflicting the Sense; it is Nonsense to say of a Mad-man, *he is out of his Senses*; the Thing is quite of another Kind, he is out of his Reason: Mad-men hear, see, taste, smell, feel, and have all Natural Operations free; the Defect lies in the Rational Performances; and to recover this, Physicians press the Senses, that they may cry out and waken the Soul, which seems doz'd and asleep; for a Lunatick is only a Man talking in his Sleep, with this Difference, that one talks when the Body is asleep, and the other has his Soul asleep——

The Nation is certainly lunatick, their Soul is asleep, and who can waken them? You must even pinch their National Senses, and let them smart a little, and that will wake them—— Is it not Nonsense to ask me a Remedy for this ridiculous Malady? — Is it for me to cure a Lunatick Nation? — Have they Eyes? Have they Hands? Have they Feet? Have they a Head? — Bid them use them—or starve, and buy Corn dear, till Want restores their National Capacities—— Have they Eyes LAWS, Feet MAGISTRATES? Say *Justices or such like*——s, God help us. Have they Hands POWER? Have they a Head GOVERNMENT? Let them use them—let them exert themselves—let them set the Wheels of Regulation to work, and it will soon be seen, whether or no they were mad before.

I would be loth to suppose, our Magistrates should say, how shall we do this? — Tho' never poor Nation had such Peace-Officers as our Justices, nor ever any Nation such an Execution of Laws——Tho' several Sets of our purblind Bench-Mongers have most gravely met to do nothing about this weighty Affair, yet I am loth to suggest, it was for Want of Wit; and tho' I should be forc'd to think it was for Want of Honesty,



I could not persuade my self to speak of the Want of Knowledge.

What, not know when Corn should be dear or cheap, not know when we have Dearth, and when Plenty? No, no, *Gentlemen*, ye are none of you that Kind of F——s——It cannot be Ignorance——And fain would I call it by a softer Word than that of K——y——I was going to call it Connivance—but that looks so like K——y, 'tis like the Advertisement in the *Daily Courant*, about Coals to be given for making an Alderman——It look'd so like Bribery, that it differ'd nothing from it, but an giving of Coals, which cost Money, differ'd from giving of Money——And some are so ill-natur'd as to say, that's *Nothing at all*.

But what shall we say to the Remedy? And what shall we say to three Benches of Justices, that met to say just nothing at all to it—or in plain *English*, could not tell what to do in it?——This was like the Town-Council of *Plymouth*, who, as Story tells, when Queen *Elizabeth* sent them Notice of an expected Invasion in 1588, wisely debated, concerning the Import of the Word Invasion—and having long discours'd upon it, and what her Majesty should mean by this Word Invasion, were at last inform'd by one graver than the rest—That when her Majesty sent them Word, *there would be an Invasion*, it was much as to say, *there would be an Invasion*; and so the Assembly broke up.

Be the Fact a Story or a Hi-story, the Case is the same; it bears much of a Parallel, with the Meeting of a certain Body of Justa.....s, to consider of reducing the Price of Corn in the County of ....., who, after long Debates were harangued, with a most elegant Speech, signifying, That Corn was really sold *very dear*, and that Corn ought not to be sold *so dear*—and that it was great Pity Corn should be sold *so dear*—That the Poor would suffer very much if Corn was sold *so dear*, that it was unreasonable Corn should be sold *so dear*, and he could not see why Corn should be sold *so dear*; that for his Part he was against Corn being sold *so dear*——

And so dear Mr. Justice sat him down, and dismiss'd the Cause; for the Assembly, after agreeing to all his most wise Resolves, adjourn'd to the next Meeting.

This wise and most significant nothing-doing Assembly have made a mighty Precedent for reducing the Miseries of the Poor, and examining into a Thing so weighty as this——What, tho' her Majesty repeats and inculcates to such Men as these the Execution of the Laws, and leaves the Relief of her good Subjects to their Management; till her Majesty shall punish some of the Neglects of those Law-Cheats, we shall have no more executive Power put forth among us.

The Reason, why the King of France has his Laws better executed than we, lies only in this, That he knows how to hang his Justices, as well as they know how to punish the People: Indeed, if we had but here and there a *Bridewell* for a Whoring Justice, a Pair of Capital Stocks for the High-Constable and drunken Magistrates, and an Ecclesiastical Whipping-Post for swearing Prebendaries and lewd Clergy, we might hope for some Reformation, and to have our Laws put in Execution a little——But till something like that is done, Laws and Authority in *England* are empty Trifles; the Rich laugh at the Justices Banter, and the Poor bid Defiance to by their Example.

Jack and his Master lying both in a Room in a cold Winter Night; Jack, says the Master; *ay, Master, quoth Jack; I believe that Window's open*, Jack, says the Master; *I believe it is, Master*, says Jack——By and by he calls again as before—Jack, says the Master; *ay Master, says Jack; wou'd that Window was shut*; Jack, says the Master; *wou'd it was Master*, says Jack——A while after he calls again——Jack, says the Master; *ay Master, says Jack; the Wind comes very cold at that Window*; Jack, says the Master; *ay so it does Master, says Jack*——At last the Master cries, *Jack, ye Dog, why don't you rise and shut that Window; if I come to you, I'll break your Head, &c.* *ay Master*, says Jack, *now you speak like a Master*, and up he gets, and shuts the Window——